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SKYDIVER, 23, IS KILLED IN SHORE JUMP

STATINTL

Young Woman Plunges To Death After Both Her Chutes Fail

Ridgely, Md., Nov. 26 (Special)—A woman skydiver, trailing two partially opened parachutes, plummeted to her death in the woods today 2 miles north of this Eastern Shore town.

Miss Sarah Frances Thompson, the 23-year-old victim, survived the initial impact but was dead by the time she reached the Easton (Md.) Memorial Hospital.

State Police said Miss Thompson's home was in Memphis, although she had been living recently in Arlington, Va. One of her acquaintances said she was employed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Chute Packed Wrong

Cesar Aguilar, 31, a witness and an experienced parachutist, said Miss Thompson apparently had packed her main parachute improperly, so that it failed to deploy completely when she pulled the rip cord.

The reserve parachute was found tangled in her arms, giving "the impression that she was holding it in," Mr. Aguilar said.

Mr. Aguilar is the safety officer for the Pelican Skydiving Club, which uses an unpaved airstrip 2 miles north of Ridgely on Route 312. He and a companion were the first to arrive at the spot where Miss Thompson landed in a clump of trees, about half a mile southwest of the field.

Account Of Death

Mr. Aguilar and the State Police at Easton Barracks gave the following account of Miss Thompson's death:

Miss Thompson was with the St. Michaels Angels Parachuting Club, a group from the Washington area who came to Caroline county to be among 77 participants in skydiving competition today. There were about 600 spectators present for the event.

Early in the afternoon, Miss

Thompson jumped from a single-engine Cessna 185 airplane piloted by Harry Schoelpe, of Hartwood, Va.

Jumping from an altitude of 3,000 feet, she fell for about five seconds before pulling the ripcord of her main parachute, which malfunctioned.

At an altitude of 1,200 feet, or a little more than a quarter of a mile, she pulled the ripcord on her reserve parachute.

The smaller reserve parachute also failed to open fully, and witnesses saw Miss Thompson plunge into the woods.

Mr. Aguilar said that she was breathing when he found her, and that he could still feel her pulse when an ambulance from Denton, Md., arrived to take her to the hospital.

At the hospital, Dr. Earl Plummer, deputy State medical examiner for Caroline, reported that she had died of multiple injuries.

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